

Letter.

To all the Churches of Jesus Christ, called to be Saints through the immortall seed which dwelleth in you, and shall be with you for ever. Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dearlly beloved Brethren,

**W**E hope it is on our hearts to live and die with you, as those that are joynd to the Lord, and each to other by the will of God, members of that one body, built up through that one everlasting spirit, a holy Tabernacle for the living God. Neither is it the least part of our joy to be serviceable unto you, who are our joy, and the delight of our dear Jesus. Surely we have been made in much sense to say to the Lord, our goodnesse extends not unto thee; but if as a few poor worms we may be usefull to thy excellent ones, to help them on to the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, it shall be enough unto us: And for this we would labour night and day, warning every one of you, striving with you, and together with you with God for you, that every one of you may be presented perfect in Christ Jesus. This design and honest desire of our souls, hath brought us together from far to sit before the Lord in this place, where we have been taking upon us to speak to God, though dust and ashes. Yea, we have been encouraged to spread before your Father and our Father, the several weigths that lie upon you and us. Wherein we have not been without hope, the Father hath not taken advantage through our confessions to condemn us in his presence, or to upbraid us, but hath smiled upon us notwithstanding. And though we have been ready to cry out, we are cut off from before thine eyes, yet hath he heard the voice of our supplication. And it is no small addition to our comfort, while we think of it, that while we carried the yokes and burdens of whole Sion, and have been as the souls under the Altar, crying, *How long Lord, holy and true, why doth this Chariot wheel make so long tarrying?* the Lord hath lightned us while we have thus looked unto him. Neither shall we be ashamed to say to you, *Rejoyce oh Daughter of Sion, behold your King, he cometh in righteousness and in peace, to give an expected end.* We have told our Father and your Father, that we could not be satisfied with life for our selves, peace for our selves, white robes for our selves, unless Sion also might be made partaker of the salvation of God. And in this we have had some faith, and some revivings have attended our souls in the hope of his mercy; and now as we have been faithfull for you to God, so we would now be faithfull for God to you. We have been arraigning the abominations of Sion before the bar of the most High; we have been crying for Justice from the throne, upon every sin, for strength and light to purge out every persisting impenitent sinner, as enemies and traytors to the crown and dignity of our Lord Jesus. More particularly, we have been spreading out our hands before the most High, and have made confession of those reigning abominations in our own souls, and in the Churches that light spirit, living short of the true light and sense of Gods Majesty in his Churches, and among his Saints; from whence proceeds that vanity and carelesnes which doth so much attend them. We have bewild that wretched worldly spirit, that plucks down the Saints from their excellency, and leaves such blacknesse upon them, which renders them so uncomely in the eyes of men. We have bewaild that coldnesse and deadnes that is upon our selves, and upon the Churches. That formality in holy duties, that indifferency, that Laodicean spirit that is fallen in upon us, while we have been crying, Let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it, let the counsel of the Lord come, that we may know it; and all this while have been drawing iniquity with the cords of vanity, having been in a great measure as without the sense of the work, so without the true travail of soul, which this work should put us into. For these things our souls have been bowed down: And some have been made to cry out, *Oh that our heads were as fountain, and our eyes were as rivers of tears, that we might weep for the iniquity of the daughters of Sion.* Behold for this our souls have been in distresse, our bowels have been troubled, our hearts have been turned within us; we have taken off our ornaments, we have been breaking and bleeding, and have been crying out for more light, because the crown is fallen from Sions head by reason of her iniquity. We have been bewailing personall iniquity, congregational iniquity, national iniquity, family iniquity, church iniquity; we have by search found poor Sion as it were witho it soundnesse, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot full of bruises and purrified sores. And now we call upon you that tremble at the word of God to come unto us; take heed, oh take heed of being unsensible of poor Jachs trouble; take heed of stretching your selves on your beds of Ivory, of drinking you wine in bowls, in chaunting at the sound of the psalme, singing you selves with the chief spices, and forget that Joseph is in affliction, your poor nation, your poor families, your poor Churches, your own poor souls are in distresse, heaven and earth seems to frown, trouble within, and terror without; these things are come upon thee, and who shall comfort thee? *Oh come down, sit in the dust, call your solemn assemblies, proclaim fasts, and weep bitterly before the Lord for all your abomination:* You have but as it were played with God you have not trembled in his presence, you have been wanton before him, having been without the terror of his Majesty, therefore you have confessed, and have delighted to word it out with the Lord, but alas, you have no sooner gon away, but you have forgot what manner of men and women you were, and thought no more on your prayers. Oh how often have you mocked God; but oh be not deceived, God will not be mocked. It appears already how God takes it at your hands, and now once more you have sent us hither, and once more our father hath smiled upon us, for we have begged him to save us yet this once more, and truly we tremble. It should be as at other times, what will the Lord doe in the end thereof, the hope that is in Israel concerning this thing lies in your putting from you that accursed thing. Oh now if you would pursue this pride, this worldlinesse, this coldnesse and slothfulness, your personall neglects, your family neglects, the Lord might yet be intreated to return and have mercy upon us, that we might be healed. Oh that now these things might be laid to heart. How doth the world as a canker eat out your affections to the Lord Jesus, eat out your time, your strength, your zeale, while you have been asleep in the lap of this *Dulcish*, your locks have been cut off, and you are but as other men; that whoever beholds you may say what singular thing do ye? now then lay to heart these crying abominations of Sion: the generall complaint in almost all the Epistles, the world is too beautiful; Satan hath seduced them the Kingdoms of the earth, and this hath Bewitched them, and their minds are much, oh too much alienated from the Lord. Oh brethren the lot is fallen upon this as a troubler of Israel, and that for which you have fallen before your enemies, bring it out now, and stone it before the Lord; yea raise up such a heap upon it, as it may never appear more; that God may make this *Valley of Achor* a door of hope. This iniquity hath been apparently written upon your foreheads, witness your remissnes in meetings, your neglect of the poor Saints, and of the Ministers of Christ, whose daily complaints and addressees are living monuments of this reigning abomination; your cruelty to servants, children, exacting all their labours, but take no time to counsell them, instruct them, to shew them that are without Christ that miserable estate wherein they are, that their souls may be the better for you, and they bound to blisse God on your behalf. And to commune in the Lord with them that are in Christ, that their souls might be comforted, edified, and encouraged to walk with God in their places. This hath made professors families so dry, uselesse, & unprofitable, Saints communion so little tending to edification. This sin eats out all that divine sweetness of regenerating and sanctifying grace. We have mourned in that we have had so great a hand in this trespass, in not bearing so faithfull a testimony against it in our ministry, but slavish fear of being accounted selfish or the like, hath stopt our mouth untill the mouth of this iniquity hath almost devouring the poor Churches of Christ. Oh we would not consult with this flesh any longer, but in our places (and desire by these to provoke all the ministering brethren every where also to be faithfull to the Lord and their poor Churches, to bear a faithfull testimony against every evil way that is hated and abhor'd of God, what censure soever they may meet withall from men. That of slothfulness, carelesnes, another reigning evil, from these two as the root springs many other dangerous hurtful practices the great hinderances of our works in our Families the Churches and our own Souls. And because they are evils rooted deeply in the heart, it is hard to get them out. And we have by experience found, how well they are able to bear with testimony against them, with Reproofs and Counsels, and yet lie close, they are Sermon-proof and Epistle-proof; so strong that they have wrested all weapons out of the hands of Saints and Ministers that have been formed against them: Now we desire we may no longer rest in a testimony of words, but proceed to take some effectual course that sin or sinners may be purged out of the house of God. In order to this, we desire the Churches that they would set some day or days apart wherein they may bewail these iniquities and pollutions of Sion before the Lord, and to bring their souls into a through tence of them also, that the ministering brethren would without respect of persons bear their constant testimony in their ministry, and from house to house night and day, warning every one to flee from those abominations; that at least they may deliver themselves from the blood of souls, having declared to them the whole counsel of God. And if still it be persisted in, and plain proofs of it in the ways and works of the professors of Christ, we leave it as the Churches special duty to pursue it, by dealing with it untill sin or sinner be purged away. We shall leave it to the Lord, and those with whom the Lord hath intrusted with his Oracles to be further opening and alledging those things whose words we desire may be heeded. Another evil we had thought to have spread before you; for want of opportunity we shall now omit, yet desire you may lay it to heart, look over again our former Epistles, and that from *Chard* we have laboured in vain, that which hath been brought forth hath been to so little purpose. And now brethren, our hope is in your obedience; in those things we hope we shall rejoyce in you, may we do rejoyce in our hope of you; in this hope we commit you to the Lord, and to the word of his grace, who is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified. We remain

We have appointed our next meeting at *Dorchester*, and desire the Churches to send their Messengers to be there the 2d day (at night) of the 2d week of the 3d month (vul.) May 1658.

From the meeting of the Messengers of the Churches in *Tiverton*, this 18 day of the 7th moneth 1657. signed by us, in their names, and by their appointment.

Yours dearly to love in, and ready to serve you  
for Christ Jesus,

Thomas Collier, Nathaniel Strange,  
Thomas Glas.

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